

House Republican Press Release

August 11, 2006
Press Office: 860-240-8700

Rep. Miller: New England Asthma Epidemic Underscores Need for Wider Biodiesel Use



Asthma Regional Council of New England Report Cites Growing Health Hazard

A recent report from the Asthma Regional Council of New England that describes asthma as “a national public health epidemic” that “continues to disproportionately impact New England” highlights the need for the state to encourage wider use of biodiesel and biofuels as a way to significantly improve air quality and reduce the incidence of asthma and other respiratory disorders in Connecticut, state Representative Lawrence G. Miller said today.

The report, The Burden of Asthma in New England, notes that “New England asthma rates for both adults and children are consistently higher than the rest of the country” and that both adults and children in New England “have among the highest regional rates of current and lifetime asthma among the 10 U.S. Department of Health and Human Services regions,” said Representative Miller, R-122nd District.

“Connecticut is the gateway to New England, and our congested state highways are crowded with automobiles and diesel trucks, which contribute significantly to our air pollution problem,” Representative Miller said. “When you add in pollution from our utility plants and other local sources, it’s easy to understand why Connecticut, and Fairfield County in particular, is frequently unable to comply with federal air quality standards. Air pollution is one of the main reasons why asthma and other chronic respiratory conditions are major health problems in our state.”

“That is why I have been fighting for the past eight years to enact incentives to encourage wider use of biodiesel and biofuels in Connecticut,” Representative Miller said.

“Widespread use of these environmentally-friendly fuels has been proven to significantly lower greenhouse gas emissions and reduce cancer-causing toxins in petroleum diesel by 80 to 90 percent. These bio-products are used by 31 countries. In our country, more than 33 states have enacted incentives to promote wider use of biodiesel and biofuels.”

“A 2005 University of Connecticut study found that using biodiesel instead of conventional diesel fuel for diesel engine trucks and biofuel for home heating systems would result in cost savings (including lower health care expenses) amounting to about \$20 million,” Representative Miller said. “While Vermont, New Hampshire, Maine, Rhode Island, Massachusetts and New York are actively promoting the use of biofuels,

Connecticut continues to drag its feet on encouraging wider use of the most promising renewable fuel in the country.”

“Given the fact that biodiesel eliminates most pollutants from diesel exhaust fumes, is less toxic than table salt and more biodegradable than sugar, it should have been apparent long ago to the bureaucrats at the Department of Environmental Protection that promoting wider use of this environmentally friendly alternative to conventional diesel is a no-brainer,” Representative Miller said.

“As the state legislature’s most vocal proponent of biodiesel for almost a decade, I will once again offer several bills during the 2007 session to encourage wider use of biodiesel and biofuels. The Asthma Regional Council of New England’s 2006 report underscored the urgent need to take immediate action to improve air quality in Connecticut and elsewhere in the northeast. The need is real and wider use of biodiesel in our state can be an important part of the solution - if the Connecticut General Assembly finally does the right thing,” Representative Miller said.